

The Tricentennial

Volume 2, Issue Ten

September 15, 1999

Lighthouse News

The Board of Directors of the Tricentennial Committee has approved converting its current charter structure to become "The Lighthouse Society of Pass Christian."

This new organization will provide an ongoing vehicle that will continue to raise funds for the construction of the Lighthouse and will provide authority over maintenance and general supervisory matters.

Everyone is invited to become a charter member as the Lighthouse Society becomes a reality in January 2000. Founding members will be listed in the revised new charter that will be registered with the State of Mississippi Attorney General's office.

A Lighthouse Quarterly Bulletin will be published that will provide members with on-going progress and events.

A membership application is inclosed in this newsletter issue requesting a \$50 enrollment fee from each individual or family subscriber.

All proceeds will go to the Lighthouse construction fund

Time Capsule

For posterity and to be opened during the Four Hundred Year celebrations of the founding of our Coast and of Pass Christian, a duplicate Membership Scroll will be deposited in the Time Capsule sponsored by WLOX-TV, Channel 13.

Duplicate scrolls of all members of the Tricentennial Committee are also posted at the Courthouse Steps (City Hall Bulletin Board) and at the Pass Christian Public Library.

Logan Hayes Youthful Entrepreneur

It was a sweltering summer day, but it was good for business, as 6-year-old Logan set aside one of her vacation days to sell cups of cooling beverage. A first grade student at Coast Episcopal, Logan was undaunted as she sat in the shade of her umbrella, enjoying the breezes, and talking with her customers in front of "Come On In" on Second Street.



Collage Ole'

Set your calendar! Admittance is Free! The annual two-day "Collage - the Festival of Arts" will be celebrated beneath the shade of the Live Oaks at Memorial Park. It will be a delightful weekend to stroll through the outdoor arts arena while listening to live music and visit the Arts and Crafts booths that will blanket the park grounds. You can even bring a beach chair to breath in the October breezes while enjoying a special gourmet lunch that will be provided by the Acadian Grill Restaurant.

The Festival will open at 10 a.m. on Saturday, October 2nd with an Art Auction. All proceeds will fund a distinctive College Scholarship in the Arts, a memorial to Pass Christian artist, Dot Hector.

(Continued next page)

(Collage Ole' Continued)

For additional entertainment, you may also make plans to attend a "Preview Party," including cocktails, heavy hors d'oeuvres, and music held at a local historical home where selected artworks will be judged.

These activities will be conducted on the weekend of October 2nd and 3rd. For information, call Georgia Leyser, 452-7879, or Susie Michael at 452-3261.

Celebrate the Gulf is also set for Saturday, October 2nd, and promises a fantastic weekend for young and old. Marine aquatic exhibits will convert the Harbor parking lot into a Tent City.

"Celebrate the Gulf", a Marine Education Festival, has been an annual event highlighting environmental issues, marine life, and recreational and commercial activities. Special hands-on experiences for young and old is touch-and-feel live snakes and alligators.

Another special treat for the youngsters is the fishing rodeo, which trains them to be concerned for "catching and releasing" live fish. Contestants must bring their own bait and rod. In maintaining coast traditions, there will be a "Marine Cuisine" tent where Coast Chefs will demonstrate how to choose, prepare, and cook local seafood.

Special "Trollies" will carry passengers to and fro between the Park and the Harbor on Saturday, October 2nd, 10am to 4pm.

Camille Remembered

More than a hundred people showed up at the Harbor to watch the casting of the Bereavement Wreath and the reading of the Listed Deceased at the Camille monument at Memorial Park while taps was played. Television crews from New Orleans, the Coast, and National Networks carried the story of Pass Christian losses to all the world.

Camille Revisited

Drury Schneider sent in a news clipping reported by Ronnie Caire to the Times Picayune 30 years ago.

In the aftermath of the Hurricane, Living in the Pass was not easy. Most major stores were demolished or put out of business. Trucks carting off debris dropped nails creating flat tires for others. Car Pools were "in" as residents conducted their shopping trips to Bay St. Louis or elsewhere. Real hardships were endured for those without a pack of cigarettes or a loaf of bread.

The Golf Club began to operate with the back-9. The Yacht Club opened temporary quarters at the Crescent Hotel (Harbour Inn). Kids got home-made soup-bowl hair cuts.

Schools were closed and there were no recreation facilities for youngsters.

A Heritage of Hurricanes

If you have never run to the shores to feel the brunt of hurricane winds, you've never experienced one of the biggest thrills in living near the Gulf Coast. The salt spray from the pounding surf is exhilarating in itself. On the other hand, braving the eye of a powerful hurricane storm can be utter foolery.

The first recorded hurricanes are remembered for the year in which they occurred. The first severe storms during the French colonial period were those of: 1721, September 13, 1723, and September 11, 1740. During the Spanish Era, they occurred on August 31, 1772, July 10, 1776, August 18, 1779, and August 24, 1780.

Reported after the Americans took control were on: August 19, 1813, August 28, 1819, August 23, 1852, and back-to-back storms occurred on August 29, 1855, and August 19, 1856. After the Civil War a big one arrived on July 30, 1870, then October 2, 1893, followed by September 22, 1906, and September 20, 1909. These two, disrupted the streetcar lines along the beach front. Then the September 29, 1915 storm played serious havoc all along the Coast followed on its heels the next year, on July 5, 1916. A very serious storm that destroyed a number of homes along the Coast took place on September 17, 1947, followed by the last of the *dated storms* on the Coast, that of Sept. 9, 1965.

However, Camille's date will never be forgotten -- it occurred on August 17, 1969. It was a storm of all storms. Other storms such as Betsy, Audry, Elena, and Georges of last year, have also placed themselves on record for their damages.

Retelling the events of the 1909 storm that hit the L&N railroad line follows. After the train had left Union Station in New Orleans, the storm caught the commuters unprepared during the day hours. The train was halted just east of Chef Menteur and the Rigolets stations, while the height of the tide rose above the Chef Menteur bridge. Aboard the stalled train, the passengers, many of whom were returning to their places along the Coast including Pass Christian, suffered drenching rains that poured into the sealed coaches through cracks around the windows and other unperceived weak areas of the aged wooden cars, particularly the leaking roof. Eventually, the winds subsided enough for a number of the men to escape the coaches in search of boat launches to take them back to New Orleans or on to their destinations. Those attempting to reach Pass Christian took a craft that survived the swells to reach Ansley in Hancock County near Lakeshore. They stayed the night on the floor and ate crackers and sardines as the only food fare to be found.

As one gentleman recalled, the next morning they had coffee and started the trek to Waveland by way of the train tracks. Along the way they encountered snakes and alligators. After hiring a buggy at Waveland, they arrived at the Bay St. Louis to find that part of the bridge had been knocked down by the battering of a run-away steel barge. A hired skiff brought them to Henderson Point at the hardest. Needless to say that the remaining walk home was hardly tolerable.

(The source of the above hurricane story was extracted from Charles Wiegand notes.)

William G. Wiegand

Not appreciated until now, is an unpublished rough draft of the history of Pass Christian with accompanying research files that were turned over to the Pass Christian Historical Society. William Wiegand's work is a major contribution that fills part of the void of little known and in many instances, unrecorded local history. As a respected columnist, writer, and reporter, he conducted numerous interviews, collected mail replies to his inquiries, and researched archival files both in Louisiana and Mississippi.

Wiegand passed away in 1971, having a lifelong dual residency between New Orleans and the Pass. He graduated from Warren Easton Boys High School, and while there, he was a member of the 1918 State championship football team. He went on to graduate from Princeton University where he was a record-breaking swimmer.

In other sports, he referred to himself as a "gentleman jockey" as he mounted his steed, *Timber*, at the Fairgrounds and at the old Jefferson Race Track.

He served his journalistic apprenticeship as a news writer with the Sun Newspaper in Baltimore, and in 1926, became a reporter for the former New Orleans States. Later, he was a reporter and columnist for the former New Orleans Item and went on to associate with Advertising and Public Relations firms. He was also noted for his articles written for national magazines.

He credited Jeanne Knost of the Pass Christian Town Library and Elena Fitzpatrick, secretary of the Chamber of Commerce for urging him to write about Pass Christian.

Besides being a major contribution to the city's heritage, of particular interest is the information he reported about some of the prominent families that lived in the Pass, including their lifestyles and the homes they lived in. Parts of it reads like a social register of the early to mid-1900s. Unfortunately, his research had just reached the stage of preliminary editing, and therefore, was never published.

**Call 452-9803 for
Collage Preview Party
Friday, October 1 from 6pm to 8pm
Music, Food, and Spirits – \$25 Donation**

History of Union Quarters - - - Pass Christian

Following the Civil War, the home at 243 East Beach was used as Union Quarters
The preservation and restoration of the integrity of this home keep it as one of the most historical
sites in the Pass. (Written and researched by Dan Ellis)

The original Pierre Saucier home remains majestic and formidable after nearly 150 years as it faces the beach overlooking the Mississippi Sound. Only six families have lived there during this period, each having contributed to the antebellum mansion's heritage.

It is architecturally described in the National Register of Historic Places as having been built in 1855. It is an impressive, two-story, frame, double-pile, Greek Revival dwelling distinguished by a one-bay pedimented portico set against the inset gallery and adorned by cast-iron filigree balustrades. The dining room, solarium, and porte-cochere were added in 1910. The separate octagonal garconniere on its west side was built in 1890.

A cast iron fence fronts the property enclosing a Magnolia Historical Marker which was dedicated in 1960. It reads, *"Union officers were temporarily quartered here during the invasion of Pass Christian."*

On the west side, adjoining the Union Quarters property, is an aging story-and-a-half, four-bay frame cottage which was also built by Pierre Saucier. It was last occupied by Mrs. Belle Christovich who died in 1969 at age 97.

First Land Ownership

The Widow Julia Asmard is known to have owned the vast area of the entire peninsula of Pass Christian from the period of English Colonial control. In 1781, her land grant was reconfirmed in the name of her third husband, Francois Carrieré when he registered the claim with the Spanish government at Pensacola, then the controlling nation of the area.

During the manifestation of her "plantation" dairy farm, the Widow freed several of her slaves, including Charles (a.k.a. Charlot), who was apparently her foreman. To him, she deeded 800 square arpents, (the equivalent of 692 square acres) which included all of the current downtown area of

Pass Christian. Following her death in 1802, Charles confirmed his ownership claim after which time he made some partial sales in order to sustain his extended family with monetary income. Apparently his "heirs" consisted of his immediate family as well as his own slaves and the former freed slaves of his benefactor, the Widow Julia Asmard. Before his death in 1835, he willed to his son, and to his slave Winny, and to his befriended former slaves, the remaining portions of his remaining consequential domain.

As a point of interest, the larger and more vast lands surrounding the Charlot Claim, was that of the deceased Widow Asmard. Contrary to her "Last Will," the land was granted to Bartholomew Pellerin in 1809, by the Spanish colonial government. This action probably took place because he was a prominent Spanish officer who had married one of the Widow Asmard's young neighbors near Delisle. In turn, he sold this granted property to Edward Livingston in a private sale in 1813, and confirmed in 1814. Livingston engaged Roger Hiern, an early Pass Christian settler, to act as his agent in land promotions of the area. While a U.S. Senator, Livingston promoted lighthouses along the Coast. This led to his selling the lot where City Hall is now located to the U.S. Government in 1831. The Pass Christian Lighthouse was the first Mississippi lighthouse on the mainland. Several pieces of Gulf front property were also sold before Livingston's death in 1836. At the end of that year, the remaining vast lands were sold to Henderson, Hughes and Shipman, a real-estate combine that led to increased sales promotions. The village of Pass Christian was incorporated in 1838.

In 1827, steamboat service between New Orleans and Mobile had affected greater traffic interest in the Pass as a place for summer homes and health safety. Observing the new developments at the Mississippi Sound were those families maintaining their principal residences at DeLisle.

Seeing new opportunities, and having a close social and personal contact with Charles (Charlot) Asmard, were the brothers-in-law, Pierre Saucier, Sr. and Ramon Lizana, Sr. An escalation of interest began to take place at the Pass Christian channel that flowed past the shore near to what is now Market Street. Upon Charles Asmard's death in 1835, Ramon Lizana, Sr. was named Executor for Asmard's Estate and Guardian to Charles' freed slave Winny, who was bequeathed a prime piece of Gulf front property with a dwelling and out-buildings. Winny's need for existence money led to her property being auctioned, at which, Pierre Saucier, Sr. was high bidder. This lot adjoined the land which he and another brother-in-law, Jean Baptiste Toulmé of Bay St. Louis had previously purchased from Charles Asmard during the 1830s. Soon afterward, brother-in-law Ramon Lizana, Sr. also purchased an adjoining lot on his east side. These acquisitions were made in the mid-to-late 1830s and during the early 1840's. Therefore, it is quite likely that a house existed on the property before the present one was built at 243 E. Beach.

Pierre Saucier and Family

The first encounter at the Pass, with Federal troops, was when the 9th Connecticut Infantry invaded the City of Pass Christian. The Union troops landed on April 3, 1862, while in pursuit of Major Lovell's small Confederate force that had retreated north of the town. The "Bedsheet Surrender," which took place in front of the Crescent Hotel (Harbour Inn), apparently stopped the shelling of beachfront dwellings as a result of Mrs. Manders signaling out to the Federal gunboats to cease their shore offensive.

In 1864, while the ravages of the Civil War were still ongoing, Pierre Saucier received news that one of his sons was wounded at Vicksburg. On their return home the young man died, followed by the father's death. Both bodies reached the Pass soon after, each packed in charcoal-filled boxes that were buried in the family cemetery at DeLisle.

Following the war, during the Reconstruction Period, the Pierre Saucier home was billeted as residential quarters for the officers that had set up a military post at the Pass. Those of the Saucier

families that remained were forced to live on the second level or in the adjoining small house. One of the surviving family members was Mary Catherine Walker, wife of Anatole Jacques Saucier. She had hid her infant son, Anatole Pierre in the attic for fear of its young life. To quiet her concerns, the Union officer in charge, tactfully asked her if she could play "*Bonnie Blue Flag*," which was then a favorite Mississippi war tune. Proudly and defiantly she replied that she most certainly could. Smiling, the officer guided her to the piano. After more than a year, the departing Federal troops were thanked for having maintained a proper decorum of chivalry as they moved their headquarters to *Beauvoir*, at Biloxi.

The young infant, Anatol Pierre (Paul) grew up to become a city alderman, the Mayor, and served as Chief of Police during the early 1900s. During a winter vacation at the Pass in 1912-13, President Woodrow Wilson arrived on Christmas Day. Then, as mayor, A. P. Saucier and his family awaited the President at the train depot. It had rained for several days and water was yet standing in the streets.

"Some rain you had, Mr. Mayor," remarked Wilson.

"Aw, we jes cleaned up the place for you, Mr. President," quipped Mayor Saucier.

In 1960, his spinster sister, Miss Louise Saucier, celebrated her 90th birthday. As one of 10 children of Anatole Jacques and Mary Catherine Walker Saucier, she reflected the family story of events that occurred. "Mother was in the parlor playing the piano when the Union soldiers walked in. Because the music was pretty, the soldiers gathered around to listen and became friendly. She explained that her parents had lived in the large Saucier home when they were first married, but moved to the smaller house on the west side once the big house was sold. At a tender age, Louise Saucier had fond remembrances for when her mother played the *Bonnie Blue Flag*.

Genealogical research shows the Saucier lineage from France beginning with Louis Charles Saucier, born in 1634. He was the father of Jean Baptiste Saucier who was born in 1674, in Canada. D'Iberville recruited Jean Baptiste as one of his

entourage who later became a prominent Sergeant during the early settlements along the Gulf Coast. He later married Gabriel Savary, one of the girls who arrived aboard the *Pelican* that had landed at Dolphin Island near Mobile. One of their sons, Henry, born in 1706, had nine children, one of whom was Phillipe who married Marie Louise Nicaise. They settled at Delisle and had eleven children. The youngest of these was Pierre, who was born in 1804. He married Eliza Nicaise and had six children. Pierre, Sr. was also the grand-nephew of Nicholas Christian Ladner, the namesake for Pass Christian. His brothers-in-law included Bertrand Lasabbe, Jean Cassibry, Jean Baptiste Toulmé, and Ramon Sebastiano Lizana, Sr. The last two, along with Pierre Saucier, Sr., acquired portions of the "Charlot Land Grant" from the freed slave, Charles Asmard. Several years after the death of Pierre, Sr., the estate was partitioned between the family members and the large family house had to be placed for sale.

*(The next owner was Mary Caroline Dewees
– to be continued)*

HISTORY NOTES

■ The first traffic light placed in the Pass was at Market Street in 1937. Its second traffic light is located at Henderson Avenue as installed in 1997.

■ In 1959, the City Hall located at the foot of Market Street caught fire, killing the prisoner then being held in the jail cell. Since then, all arrested suspects are placed in the jailhouse in Gulfport. That 3-story City Hall was built in 1926 and was torn down following Camille damages. Its predecessor was built in 1885 by Frank Sutter.

■ In 1964, U.S. News & World named the 5-mile stretch of Pass Christian's Scenic Drive/Beach Avenue as one of the three wealthiest streets in the United States.

Fort Henry

During the 1880s, the War Department had determined to erect sea coast batteries in strategically located towns along the Gulf Coast. They offered to equip and build the fortification provided the community furnished the land.

Leading citizens decided to compete with neighboring towns for the honor of possessing such a fortification by raising necessary funds to purchase a tract of ground. Henderson's Point at the extreme end of the village, was selected and accepted by the War Department.

The Fort site and grounds made an ideal spot for a military encampment, affording the advantages of transportation, both by rail and water, salt bathing for the soldiers, ample grounds for drilling and camping, and an abundance of pure artesian water.

It was constructed of clay, re-enforced with heavy timbers, and mounted with two long 10-inch Napoleon revolving cannons, and four 8-inch mortars. These guns were reportedly brought over from Fort Massachusetts at Ship Island, and were hauled to the site from Gulfport by the first eight-wheeled log-wagons on the Coast.

The fort was named in honor of Adjutant General William H. Henry of Brandon, Mississippi, a descendant of Patrick Henry, one of the signers of the Declaration of Independence.

As unfolded by one of the town leaders, "Major Rockwell, an army engineer, shortly arrived and then we all got busy. A day was set for the inauguration of this colossal enterprise, the armament consisted of one old smooth, bore cannon that had probably seen service during the War of the Revolution."

One of the militiamen remarked that, "it was a sure enough cannon all right, although we never tested it for fear of its bursting and thereby causing us untold anguish, for we knew that the government would never replace it."

He continued to relate that, "The War Department ordered the regular troops stationed at New Orleans to attend the opening ceremonies.

"The famous Washington Artillery was sent by the State of Louisiana, as also Benham's Field Battery. Several militia companies from up-State (Mississippi) were sent and when they arrived the town went crazy. The Washington Artillery brought with them the then famous Mexican band of sixty pieces, and the regulars had a fine one also, and these, with the martial music of the fife and drums, enthused the locals in such a manner that most of them got drunk," continued his report.

"The (Mexican Gulf) hotel (at Davis Avenue) did its share to heighten the festivities. A Grand Ball was given in the house and a "fete champetre" with fire works was held on the lawn in front. There never was before, nor, I believe since, seen so much patriotism, so much military splendor and so much jollity as reigned in Pass Christian during the days and nights that the Carnival lasted," he exclaimed.

Mayor Sam Heaslip was appointed Brigadier General, John Lang was made Captain, and Charles Rhodes was commissioned Quartermaster.

In the early summer of 1888, the *Washington Artillery* of New Orleans first occupied the grounds followed by: the *Thornton Artillery* of Pass Christian, the *Vaiden Videttes* and the *Crystal Springs Rifles* of Biloxi, and Major E.J. Bowers (a former U.S. Congressman), held the last encampment at the Fort.

Following several years of false starts, Fort Henry eventually went into disuse. The valiant militia was defeated by the Coast's famous mosquitos. In 1908, the cannons were destroyed with explosives and were sold for scrap. Some of the cannon mounts remained at the fort site as late as the mid-1940s, and now, the new Highway 90 overpass at Henderson Point has swallowed up all that remained of the Fort Henry ramparts.

P.C. Lighthouse Society

**Please make \$50 check payable to
Tricentennial Committee
Mail to POB 354, PCMS, 39571**

Gun Club Perseveres

Following a number of years trying to find a firing range site, the Pass Christian Gun Club announces a meeting for September 22, 1999, at 7:00 p.m., in the Public Library Conference Room..

The Agenda will include:

- Payment of \$15 membership dues.
- Use Agreement between Club Membership and the P.C. Police Department.
- Gun Safety Classes to be organized.
- Election of Officers.

The adult public is invited to join. Further information may be secured from Gordon Burton, 452-2242, or Dayton Robinson, 452-4543.

A Luau Fund Raiser

The best way to raise funds is to make fun while doing it. The 1st Annual Scholarship Fund drive is being hosted by the Donnows at their Sweet Bay home in TimberRidge. The Hawaiian Luau is scheduled for Sunday, September 19 from 3pm until. Food, Music, Boat Rides and Spirits are provided for a donation of \$25.

The scholarship fund supports admittance to the Learning TECH Quest School for disadvantaged children with learning disorders. For information, call 868-8641.

VFW Officers

Jim Morgan was recently installed as the new Commander of the Veterans of Foreign Wars at the Pass Christian Post, along with Sheila Ladner, who heads up the Ladies Auxiliary.

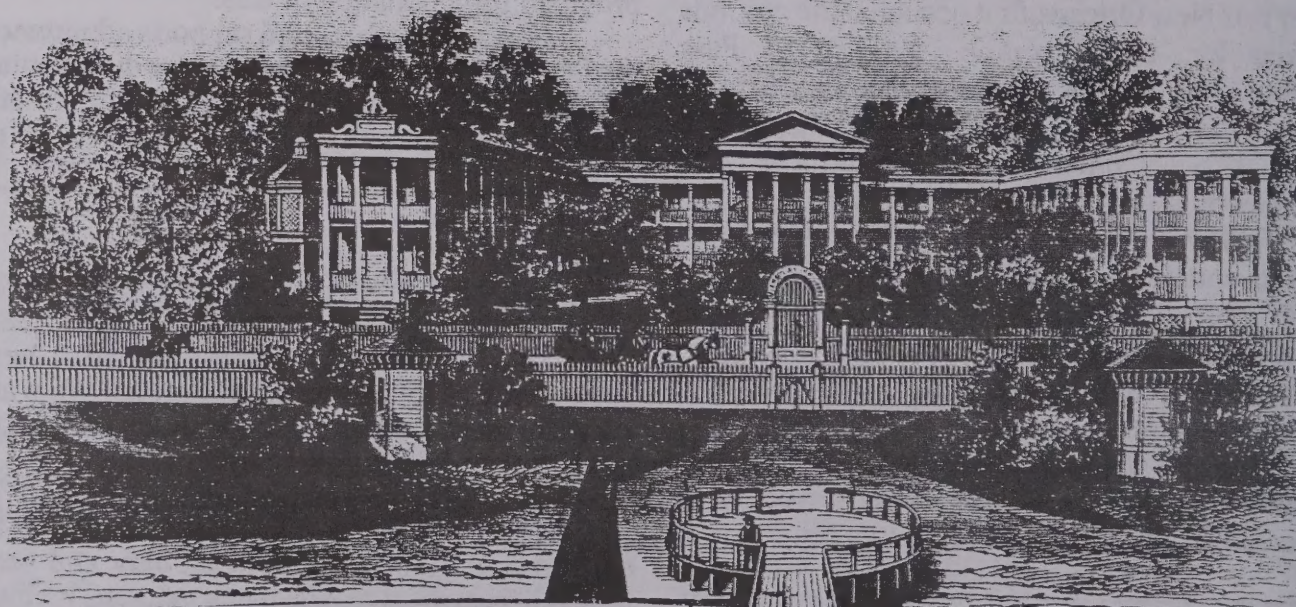
Increased membership is their primary goal this year. Some posts throughout the nation have expanded eligibility for military duty and service time that previously made many veterans ineligible. Additional information can be secured by calling 452-3840, or dropping by Post Headquarters on Scenic Drive at Fleitas Avenue.

Some of the monthly functions include a Friday Steak Nite and several special benefit dinners for charities. A fellowship bar is open on weekends and some evenings. The Post Hall may also be rented for private parties.



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Congratulations to Skipper John Dane III

Not only did the Pass Christian Yacht Club host the internationally famous Lipton Regatta, celebrating its 80th annual championship, but John Dane III succeeded in making the PCYC a back-to-back winner, having won the cup last year and giving the club the honor to host the Regatta during the Pass's Tricentennial Year.

Congratulations to the Pass Christian Yacht Club in its 150th Anniversary.

It was in the Pass Christian Hotel shown above, where the beginnings of Southern Yachting took place in 1849, as the manager/owner R.H. Montgomery promoted and organized the first Regatta on the Gulf Coast, thus starting the second Yacht Club after that of New York.